

MICROCOSM

PREFACE

Microcosm is published twice each year at Copiah-Lincoln Junior College, Wesson, Mississippi. To encourage writing for the Arts Festival Edition, the **Microcosm** staff, under the direction of Mrs. Edna Earle Crews, sponsored a literary competition for high school students in this junior college district and for Copiah-Lincoln Junior College students.

Dr. Sarah Rouse, Chairman of the Department of Humanities at Mississippi College, judged the college entries, and the **Microcosm** staff judged the high school entries. The **Microcosm** staff wishes to thank all who submitted manuscripts to the contest. The first place junior division entries and the award winning senior division entries appear in this issue of **Microcosm**.

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Microcosm

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A. P. Release

NOAH IN LOVE

Once we fell together,
Visions of life in a water trough
Burst into my head,
With a wailing baby and an unmade bed.

After I drowned the two of us,
You left no chance of it being accidental.
Now I pursue my dear bought duty,
Purchased with overflowing reality,
Which floats me beyond circumstance and appearance,
Down mythological rivers
Where stories of lovers are told.

I wash ashore to some Lewis Carroll land
Where I find you waiting
Though you are ages and miles away.

WASHINGTON (AP) - Today a group of archaeologists claim to have found remains of the fabled Noah's ark. The ark is said to have sunk in the course of the biblical flood. A spokesman for the team of archeologists is quoted as saying, "The ark sank because construction was apparently halted for a period, then taken up again."

NIGHT TO MORNING AUTO-IMPRESSION

Wind blows,
Cooling flesh,
Meeting mesh resistance—
Backgammon desire.

Moon blinks,
A cloudy strobe.
Light races to the skin
And turns rocky soft.

Wind swirls.
Shrubs drum, one on another,
Awesome now but slips away—
Muted checkmate.

Moon night.
Light pays definitive debts to darkness.
Wind blows, breezy cold.
Fleeting cooler, freezing cold.

Starry night—
Shallow fright.

Daylight—
Cream, black, blue, grey.

Crystal atmosphere—
Fill me up!

Living is lying in death measured truth.

TRAIN

Several thousand falls from a train,
One push, he is there,
Ragged fleshed, ready to ride again.
A lot of people standing behind him.

Locomotive dazed, he is riding,
Diving from a train to rocks.
In a fruit car,
From green to grey.

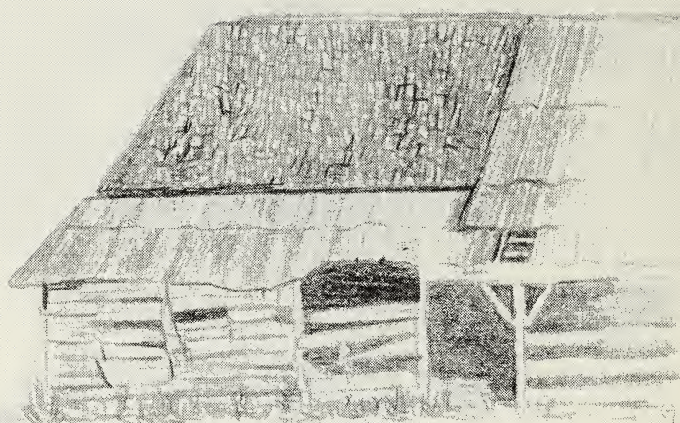
In a cattle crib,
Smooth to spiney.

In a skin freight,
Dry to oily.

From a fast train,
To rocks and rust.

Several thousand leaps from a train,
One bound, he is there,
White meat exposed, ready to jump again
And at the same speed,
Whining wheels are louder.

— Derrell Smith
First Place, Senior Award



Polly Yates
Pencil Drawing

Recollections

A few weeks ago, I returned to my childhood home to view some sights I had forgotten. I wanted to refresh my memory and see if things really were as I imagined them to be. Some pictures in my mind had faded, and I wanted to repaint them their true colors. As I neared my old homeplace, I wondered what changes might have taken place since I left it nearly seven years ago.

When I rounded the last curve and my former home came into view, I was rather shocked at the sights I saw. From afar, the house looked basically the same. Its surroundings were not the same, though. The land behind the house, where I had planted, cultivated, and picked corn, lay idle. The new owners had let the fields grow up in weeds and grass.

After I parked my car in the front yard, I walked slowly to the other fields across the road out of sight. As I passed the old barn, I noticed the sides of it were beginning to decay. I could remember milking, feeding cows, and playing there. Now, I could see the marks left on it by the rough hand of weather. Behind the barn, I could see the other fields I wanted to explore. The first one had grown up in weeds and small pines. About half the second one was still in cultivation, but the other half looked like a young tree farm. The fences around the fields were almost falling.

As I stood there dumbfounded, looking at the land, I thought of what Wordsworth wrote in "Tintern Abbey."

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again. . .
And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, do doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o're the mountains by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led -- more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then. . .
To me was all in all. . .

The third and last field shocked me even more than the others. To look there after nearly seven years of absence, brought more pain than pleasure. A stranger could not have known that I had set out potato draws there just a few years ago. This field stunned me so badly, I turned and ran from that desolate field which lives yet in my mind.

Driving back home, I resolved not to sell my home after my children have passed their childhood years. They should not have to see their old home go to waste as I have seen mine. New owners make changes about a place, thus disrupting the old familiar scenes one gets accustomed to seeing. Usually the changes are for the worse, destroying the beautiful scenes painted in one's mind.

— Mike Cupit
First Place, Senior Award



Larry Johnson
Pencil Drawing

She'll Never Know

"It's almost time to go. Where is Mrs. Hart?" mumbled Cathy. "I'm ready to go. I've practiced these dumb piano drills ten times each just like she said."

Cathy nervously twisted around to the hard bench letting her eyes dart here and there restlessly. She spied a small pile of coins half hidden under a stack of sheet music. Sliding down the bench, she suddenly swirled around to face the door and then glanced out the window to see if anyone was looking. Easing back to the cabinet, she slowly turned to face the cabinet. Her heart fluttered as her stomach did somersaults. She slowly stretched her shaking hand out, snatched the coins up, thrust them into her jeans, gathered up her sheet music and dashed out.

Cathy kept telling herself it was only right that Mrs. Hart pay, after all she was well paid to teach music and half the time she would just assign stupid drills, leave, and come back later to dismiss Cathy. It wasn't fair, she wasn't working for all that money, and besides Mrs. Hart wouldn't ever know.

As Cathy turned the corner, Mrs. Hart entered the music room and smiled to herself when she saw that Cathy was gone. She thought of how pretty Cathy was, but much too impatient to ever be a good pianist. Taking the room in with a quick glance, she noticed the sheet music was about to slide out of the cabinet. As she looked out the window at the children playing, she absent-mindedly shuffled all the music together and walked out locking the door behind her, never noticing that the money was gone.

Cathy felt so big, so important as she sat on the bus with all of her friends crowding around while she made a list of candy to be given away. William would get off the bus at one end of town, and while the bus made a trip around town, he would be waiting to be picked up again with the candy he would buy for anyone who had the money. Cathy did feel ashamed when she lied and told everyone it was her allowance money she had saved.

When William got back in the bus, the fun really started. Cathy laughed and joked and felt so big as she handed candy out to everyone.

Her friend, Sue, came over later that afternoon and Cathy felt so big as she began to brag and relive the scene again. Cathy was so wrapped up in her story that she didn't hear the door open and she just rattled on until her father softly asked, "Where did you get the money, Cathy?"

She froze for a second before she jumped to her feet saying she had found it on the playground. Her father just looked at her and said, "Cathy, I think we had better go inside and talk this over."

In no time at all, Cathy had twisted herself in a knot of lies and she broke down and told the truth.

As punishment her parents gave her a choice: a spanking, no TV, and no allowance and knowing her parent's disappointment, or she would have to take the money from her next ten allowances and give it to Mrs. Hart, explain what she had done and apologize. Weighing the choices, Cathy chose to talk to Mrs. Hart.

Cathy's feet were dragging as she slowly walked to the door of the music room. This was the second time she had come, and maybe this time she would get up the courage to open the door. She slowly swung the door open and nearly fell to the floor when she saw Mrs. Hart wasn't there. She started to leave but knew she would only have to come back later, so she just waited.

Cathy sat on the bench twisting and turning for what seemed an eternity, her brain whirling and her heart pounding. Finally Cathy couldn't stand it any longer--she found a pencil and a piece of paper and wrote:

Mrs. Hart,

I'm sorry, I stole \$1.37 from you yesterday, and now
I'm returning it because I'm really sorry.

Cathy

Hurriedly Cathy placed the message on the piano, weighing it down with the money, and, with considerable relief a wiser Cathy flew down the hall.

Several minutes later a woman came into the room. Spying the note, she picked it up and read it. She smiled slightly and put the note in her pocket, scooped up the money and put it in her other pocket. Turning around, Mrs. Canton, the cleaning lady, picked up her broom and began to sweep. Later, as she started to leave, she muttered, "She'll never know."

— Beverley K. Tarver
First Place, Senior Award



Robert Case
Pencil Drawing

Christmas Eve At Grandmother's House

Early in the day, Christmas Eve, my grandfather would take the old mule, pulling a slide, to the back of the pasture, to a secluded spot where the cedars grew. There were cedars of all sizes growing there, dancing happily in the cold wind, along the branch that trickled through the length of the pasture, down to the sawdust pile that formed a pond we called the "sawdust pond." Big Daddy would walk up to a tree and slowly walk around it, then he would back away and repeat the action. This he did until he found our Christmas tree, just the right tree. He would then cut the tree, making as few licks against it as possible, then loading it on the slide would direct Old Bessie home.

We children would stand on the old gallery of the house and watch out across the pasture until the procession was in sight, then off we would go stringing across the gravel road to meet "our tree."

When the burden was finally lifted off the slide, and Bessie unhooked from her traces and turned out into the lot to feed and water, Big Daddy would sit down on the side porch steps to fan himself a moment with his old brown felt winter hat. We settled down somewhat knowing that our tree would soon adorn the largest room with the tallest ceiling in the house.

When the rest period was over, and Big Daddy had had a drink of water and a refill of his pipe with fresh tobacco, he would begin the labor of mounting the tree to a stand. This was some doing, for the tree was always so large it required much support at the base to help it stand tall and erect as we knew it would.

Soon all was ready - the tree was being dragged, ever so gently, through the doorway into the room. We all had to help in our small way to stand the tree. It was so tall its top touched the ceiling, and its branches spread out and hung as an umbrella that enfolded each of us as we walked into it, playing a short game of hide-and-seek. The delightful fragrance of fresh cut cedar filled the house.

While this was all taking place, Big Mama was getting all her tree decorations out that had been stored all year, so well that look-if-we-might, we could never find a trace of them. With loving care of

each ornament, icicle, and rope, we decorated the tree. Each time we did it it was as though it were the first. Having finished the happy work, we would all stand back to gaze at the beautiful creation shining in the firelight, as though a million stars had burst apart and pieces had touched our lovely tree at every angle. By the time the tree was finished, all the kinfolk had arrived, and it was officially Christmas Eve.

Night was ushered in with each picnic basket being opened and trays, jars, crocks, and pots of mouth-watering "special food" being spread on the table, dressed in its best white starched linen, in the dining room.

Now was the time to stop, and with each head bowed, in true reverence, Big Daddy thanked God for another well, trouble-free, and bounteous Christmas and for health that gave us the strength to raise all those good foodstuffs. Of course, we sampled each and every dish and item on the table, stuffing ourselves to happy discomfort around the middle.

The merry time around the table nearing an end, someone would always notice that the stately Christmas tree had become bedecked with luscious fruit, tasty candy, and assorted gifts. The aroma of citrus mingled with the cedar air. This change had come about it seemed through some miraculous change or visit from some unknown saint. All around the base of the tree were baskets of apples, oranges, grapes, bunches of dried raisins, tangerines, and even sugar cane, and a big pumpkin would seem to smile up at us. Candy canes hung on the branches; doll babies sat on limbs near the trunk of the tree; now and then a dump truck or tractor sparkled through the folds of the branches. There was always a ball or two that would fall from its perch in the tree.

When the happy scramble of gift exchange was over and the fireworks discovered, we would all go outside into the night, to watch the trail of Roman candles as they shot toward the clear star-studded Christmas Eve sky. The candle lights seemed to take the form of the stars and become as one with them.

With the last of the colors fading away into the night, we would one by one find our way back into the warm house and fall exhausted beside the fireplace.

Later our father would wake us and take us into his arms for the short walk home - one on each hip and mother carrying the baby. As we walked down the road and over the old bridge of the branch, below the sawdust pond, we would, as if in a dream, hear the soft lowing of a cow in the pasture, and remember again the story Big Mama told us of the cow in the cave that contained the manger, that long ago Christmas Eve night.

Soon we were home, safe and warm, tucked into our deep feather bed, with dreams of early morning and Christmas Day.

— Betty Barham
Second Place, Senior Award

The Broken Chain

The morning had held no warning of the conflict the day would bring -- the inner conflict that would take form inside me. Yet it came. Hanging up the phone, my mind goes over the happenings of today. I realize that whoever said "Today is sometimes murdered by yesterday and tomorrow," was a very wise man.

This evening, after I had dressed, I glanced in the mirror at the gold locket around my neck. It had hung there for over a year now, and I never removed it, not even during my baths. The locket was special to me. Greg had fastened it around my neck. I remember he said, "It looked like it was waiting to be worn just by you." That was the last night we were together; he was killed in Vietnam a few weeks later. Jeff, my present fiance, resents the locket. He thinks it's 'silly' to keep on wearing it but I just can't bring myself to remove it. I checked my dress and hair; then the door bell rang.

I opened the door, "Come on in, Jeff, let me get my coat."

"Could that wait a minute, I have something I want to show you."

I turned to see and there in a black velvet box was a beautiful polished gold cross and on his face a smile comparable to that of a child who thinks he's accomplished the impossible.

He continued, "The diamond in the middle is from your promise ring. I had the jeweler make it, tailor made, so to speak."

"Jeff, it's beautiful!" He looked as if to ask, "Is that all it rates, just 'it's beautiful.' " I didn't know what else he wanted me to do or say so I took it, put it on my dresser and came back with my coat. "Ready?"

Disappointment spread over his face. "You're not gonna wear it?"

"Jeff, you know I can't, I can't take this off." I held the locket up for him to see.

"Grow up, Pat, or should I say wake up! This is '74 not '72!" He



Natalie Wilkinson
Pen and Ink

was shouting and I was hurt. I stalked off to the bedroom and locked myself inside. In a few minutes he slammed the front door.

“How could he?” I thought out loud. “He knows I can’t.” I reached for the locket and felt protected by its presence.

After changing into some old jeans I decided to do the wax job I’d been putting off for so long, since I was going to be in for the night. I removed the old wax, mopped, got out the wax and applicator and bent down to pour some wax on a section of the floor. When I stood up, I heard it snap. The handle of the applicator had caught the chain of the locket and when I stood up, it fell to the floor. I stared at the broken chain in horror. Why was I waxing a floor at 9 o’clock at night, anyway? Having it fixed didn’t cross my mind, I only thought of Greg. To me he died a second death at the snapping of the chain. I felt light, as if some burden had been lifted from me; tears stung my eyes and ran down my face, I brushed them away with the back of my hand.

“Greg,” was all I whispered. He was really gone for me now. The broken chain was our broken relationship and nothing could put it together exactly like it was. I kneeled beside it and thought of the night he gave it to me, the morning I waved good-bye at the airport and the day his brother came to tell me of his death. I wanted to scream but couldn’t; the agony filled my heart until I thought it would burst, but all I could do was stare and shake my head in disbelief. I thought of Jeff who had comforted me after Greg was killed, and we had grown to love each other. My thoughts focused on tonight -- his eagerness to please, the cross, then his disappointment. I ran to the phone and automatically dialed his number. I didn’t know exactly what to say but I had to make him understand that I’d been living in the past, unable to accept the dealings of fate. God, please let him understand.

After what seemed like hours, a tense voice on the other end said, “Hello?”

“Jeff?”

“Yes.”

“He’s dead, Jeff. He’s really dead!” — Robbie Rhoades
Second Place, Senior Award

The World From My Window

The world from my window on an early autumn morning is beautiful. When I place my African violet in the window each morning for its dose of sunlight, I must take time for a glimpse of the beauty in the dawning of a new day. A groan usually comes from my roommate when I raise the blinds, but she always turns over to get ten more minutes of sleep before her alarm clock rings.

As I look through the window the rays of the sun have just touched the corners of the buildings and the treetops. The sky is a combination of pink, blue, and gray, with wisps of mare's tails here and there. Occasionally a shadow of a moon will linger, fading gradually as the sun makes his presence known. The few clouds disperse as the pink and gray fade, leaving the crystal blue sky to complement the various colors of the trees and the red of the brick buildings.

The architecture of the buildings reminds me of Colonial Williamsburg, as they stand, their windows looking like droopy eyes. The flag waves gently to the leaves below, as they dance in the breeze.

The scene is that of a small community college anywhere in the United States, where small-town students prepare themselves for life.

Suddenly the ringing of the alarm clock brings me back to reality. I must hurry to breakfast. I must also bring my mind back to English, algebra, speech, and western civilization, instead of letting it wander out the window where the sun shines and the wind blows.

— Suzanne Paul
Honorable Mention, Senior Award

Sign Of The Times

Betty walked up and down the long counter, exchanging banter with the truck drivers who had come in for a midnight snack. She passed out coffee, took orders and made change with dexterity acquired by long practice. Glancing at the clock, she thought, "I'm glad I have just ten minutes to go. I feel awful, I've been drinking too much coffee."

"Lordy, I'm tired," she told Vivian when she came in to relieve her at midnight. "The trucks are really rolling. Christmas business, you know. Twelve hours is a long stretch in this joint."

Vivian nodded. "Eight hours is a long stretch in a truck-stop cafe. I wouldn't work the extra four hours for just anyone. But Flora is so good to us, and she really wanted to go to her grandmother's funeral . . . Better put your coat on," she added. "It's cold out there."

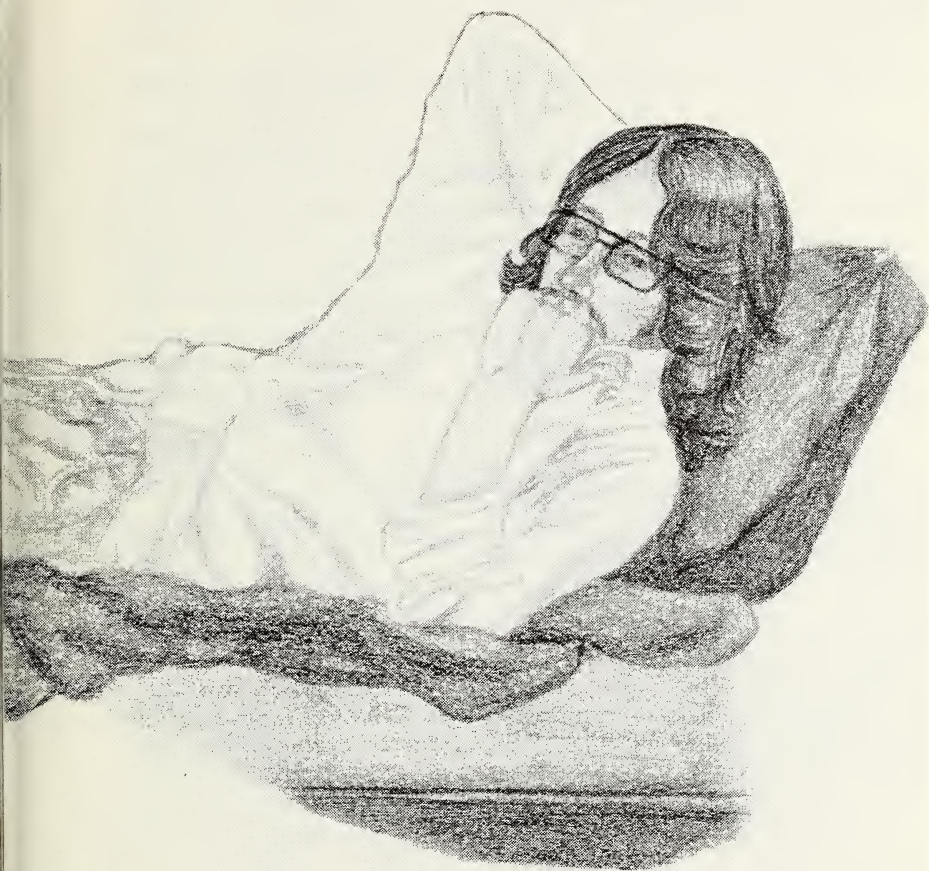
Shoving her arms through the sleeves of her coat, Betty said, "Nite, Mack," to the short order cook, "See ya!" to Viv, went out and got into her old car and drove the mile to her "home".

She felt terrible. Trying to stay awake, she had drunk about six cups of coffee during the past four hours and it was making her shaky. "Oh, well," she thought, "I'll soon be home and in bed, and I'm too tired to stay awake."

She parked the car in her space, ran up the short flight of stairs, and entered her small apartment. The room was a mess. No place to put anything. She took off her coat and spread it across the foot of the bed. "Next winter I'm going to buy an electric blanket," she thought. She grabbed a few pieces of clothing off of a chair and carried them to the bathroom hamper, washed her face, pulled off her uniform and fell into the bed, shivering.

Betty closed her eyes, but the sensation that something was in the room kept her from falling to sleep. She opened her eyes briefly. A large, distorted shadow passed across the wall. Half awake, she lay and watched it through slitted eyes. She knew there was something she had to do, but her exhausted body lay inert on the bed, and she could not remember what it was.





Cyndi Alford
Pencil Drawing

She twisted and turned on her side. There the shadow was again. She could not get fully awake, neither could she go to sleep. "That darn coffee!" she thought. She felt that she was floating through the air and the shadow was following her.

"I can't stand it" she said aloud, and her voice woke her. Her eyes flew open for a moment, then closed. She finally quit shivering and was beginning to feel warm. Still, she felt the presence hovering over her. She tried to sit up, but a strange lethargy held her down.

Betty pulled the covers over her head. Her breathing was slow and even and she was warm and comfortable. She did not know how long she slept, but about two o'clock in the morning, a fire truck raced by in the street below, its siren wailing and bell clanging. At that moment, Betty dreamed that a great, rainbow-colored bird, lights flashing on its wings, shrieking loudly, swooped down on her bed. In her dream-state, cold terror possessed her, and she uttered a piercing scream. Betty was fully awake now, and wet with cold perspiration. The fire truck was far down the street, and she had no idea as to what had awakened her.

Suddenly, a fierce anger flooded her mind. She jumped out of bed, walked on tiptoes across the cold floor to the window, and closed the venetian blind tightly.

"That flashing neon beer sign is going to drive me crazy yet," she told the empty room.

She ran back to the bed, lay down, pulled up the covers, and fell into a deep sleep.

— Marguerite Ogletree
Honorable Mention, Senior Award

The Resurrection

There stands an old house deserted by the years. Silently now it stands with no sounds but the wind blowing through the trees. This house is locked, but behind its closed doors remained many and unhappy memories.

Its walls once solid, are giving way with decay. No sound of children's playing and laughing is in the woods surrounding it as before. There is only silence. The wind does not rejoice now, but cries in mournful sorrow for what used to be a happy house. See the shadows fall around its once solid frame? They laugh and play around it in great joy but the wind still cries. Even the birds have stopped singing to listen to this mournful lament. The shadows have stopped their playing and seem to understand. Then even the wind ceases its crying and all is silent at the house, once beautiful in its splendor. All is silent, until somewhere far away some dogs break the stillness and then the birds resume their singing.

Night comes and the sounds of crickets and locusts are heard. Somewhere in the darkness owls call to each other. Close by a whip-poor-will cries out as night unfolds. The old house still stands staunchly silent with its lonely memories for comfort. Suddenly there is a sign of life because a light is seen; but the light fades away and all is back to normal. The light was only a hunter.

The sounds of morning bring all to a sleepy awakening. Today is a happy day for the melancholy wind and the creatures near the old house because someone has come to live here. Now there will be happiness behind the door of an almost forgotten old house that last night was standing alone listening to the sad song of the wind and the forlorn sounds of the night creatures.

Do you hear the wind today? Has it stopped its mournful cries? Someone has found peace and happiness today and the old house is at rest once more. No more will the wind mourn in sorrow for the old house. Silence can only bring a broken heart. Do you hear the laughter? There is joy once more in the halls of the old house left to die alone.

— April Moak
Honorable Mention, Senior Award

Should I Worry

The crisp, autumn breeze blew through Amanda's auburn hair and a chill went through her body -- winter was on its way. She walked to the grocery store and back because only a few pleasant days remained, and she wanted to enjoy them. Her arms ached under the weight of two grocery bags of makings for a dinner party. Walking around to the patio behind her beach house she placed the bags on the table. As she began removing the contents she glanced at her watch -- her guests were due to arrive in two hours and ten minutes.

Amanda had come to North Carolina at the beginning of the summer to take a job in interior design. Luckily the job was within driving distance of Clearwater Beach, so she set up residence on the beach with the intentions of mixing pleasure with work. Now that the days for warm, pleasant weather were limited she wanted her family, who lived in Tennessee to visit her and enjoy an outdoor dinner with her.

She began busily preparing for the dinner party. All of her families favorite dishes were being prepared. This was a special occasion for Amanda because it had been two months since she had been with her family and it would probably be the last time before Christmas.

A bright, gingham cloth covered the patio table on which were four place settings -- one for her father; one for her mother; one for her nine-year old brother, Kip, and one for herself. The table and its contents were accented by a centerpiece of shells and greenery. Everything was in place and the food was sending delicious smells from the kitchen out onto the patio.

Amanda went back into the house to check her "special dinner." The radio was on and she was humming in tune with the music while she turned her pot roast.

"Family of three was killed a short time ago on I-85 ten miles north of town. The victims were a man, his wife, and a small son. Their car collided head-on with one with a Charlotte tag. The car from Charlotte was apparently coming up the wrong side of the interstate. The driver of the

second car is in critical condition in Besemer Hospital. Authorities say that the identity of the victims is being withheld pending notification of next of kin."

Poor family wiped out in an instance because of carelessness, how terrible. Then terror gripped at Amanda's throat and she felt she would suffocate -- a family of three -- names withheld until family is contacted -- happened here near the city. Every muscle in her body tensed as thoughts tumbled through her mind, but she must be calm as not to get upset over a speculation that came out of her head. Of course, she couldn't help but think about her family when something of that nature was mentioned, but there were thousands of people that traveled that interstate daily so why should she relate that accident to her family? She soon dismissed the idea and occupied herself with the preparations for dinner.

Burners were turned low to keep the completed meal warm. Amanda had an uneasy feeling because it was time for her guests and they weren't here. Oh, I'll give them time; there is no way under the sun they could time a trip like that to be completely accurate, she convinced herself. Fifteen minutes, thirty minutes, then an hour passed. The feeling of terror returned to Amanda and the broadcaster's words pounded in her head -- family of three killed -- man, wife and small son (how small?) -- names withheld. . . . Magazines scattered over the floor when she overturned the coffee table in a wild attempt to get to the telephone. With shaking fingers, Amanda dialed the number of the Police Department. The phone rang only once before it was answered.

"Police Department"

"Ah, hello, my name is Amanda Castilow and, uh, I'm calling about an accident that happened on the interstate a short while ago. Can you please give me the identification of the deceased?"

"M'am, what was the nature of the accident?"

"It was a head-on collision of a Charlotte man and a family of three -- a man, his wife and son. I think they said the other car was coming up the wrong side of the interstate and the driver, uh, killed all three of them."

Tears began to roll down Amanda's face and her grip tightened on the receiver.

"Thank you, M'am. It will take a little while to review the accidents that have occurred this evening because, as you know, there are always quite a few. Give me your number and I will call you as soon as the information is obtained."

Amanda gave the officer her number and shakily replaced the receiver. How long will it take she wondered as she dropped to the couch. Minutes dragged like hours as a million thoughts raced through her mind. Maybe Daddy had to work today and they forgot the date; maybe I should call -- no, I can't!

R-r-i-n-n-g

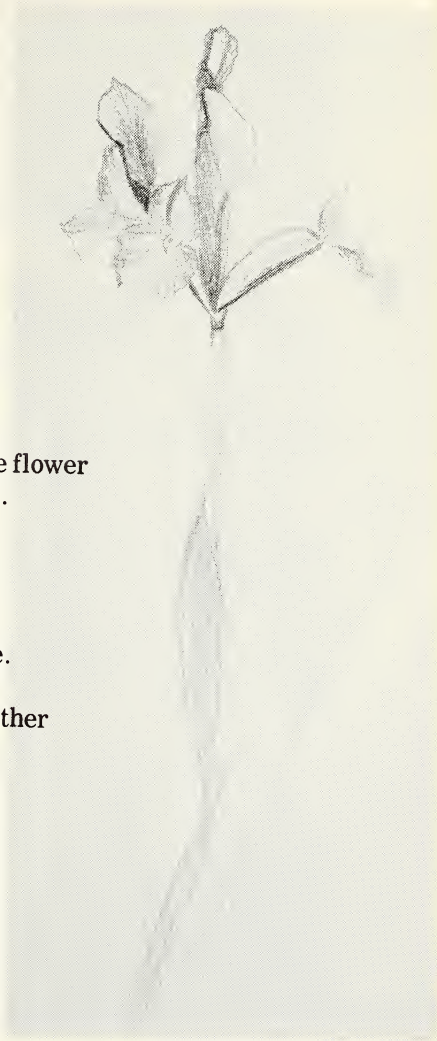
The phone jarred through her body followed by a wave of nausea and weakness that made her hand almost refuse to lift the receiver. Maybe it's mother or daddy calling to explain -- or maybe, again, it's the police officer to give me the deceaseds' identity. Who are they? At any rate her hour of torture was over. She fumbled for the phone, lifted the receiver and in a breath of prayer said, "Hello?"

— Wanda Cone

— Honorable Mention, Senior Award

Musing

I saw my love yesterday
basking in the sunshine
 in the woods
 on a hillside.
I saw him lean back and grin,
 probably musing
about the sweet nothings
he was going to whisper
in my ear tonight.
Watching from a distance
I saw him pluck the daisy petals from the flower
in his I-love-you-I-love-you-not motions.
Being original and an individualist
he probably purposely came to an
I-love-you conclusion of the petals.
 And then,
I saw this other being run into the picture.
 Suddenly,
they were laughing and frolicking together
 in the woods
 on a hillside
 and
I was made to realize
that I was the one
who had been musing.



— Vera Minor
Second Place, Senior Award

Polly Yates
Pencil Drawing

Homeward Bound

Monday! What an awful day to start the week on! I walked around to the back of the house, set my books down on the kitchen counter, and aimlessly opened the refrigerator door. I was hungrier for understanding than anything else, but the stillness of the house told me that no one was home. I pushed open the screen door that I had just entered and sat down glumly on the back steps. The concrete was cold and rough, but the sun was warm on my face and arms. My eyes looked at the now familiar back yard, noticing the details and turning them over to my mind.

This was definitely my family's back yard; each member had left his or her signature somewhere in it. Over there were my mother's early-blooming jonquils and her tidy clutter of clay pots and trowels. Through the window of his workroom, I could see my dad's handtools and the rakes and hoes. The tire swing hanging from the pecan tree in the back corner waited for my little sister. The empty clothesline swayed in a gently rocking breeze and one of our cats sauntered up, still drowsy from her recent nap. This was my backyard all right, and this was my family and where I rightfully belonged. But I wasn't happy here and I was homesick for the life I had so recently left. This might be my house, but my heart wasn't at home here.

I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere just sitting on the steps, letting my thoughts run; so I jumped off and crunched down the gravel drive to the front sidewalk.

It was still early afternoon, and there were just faint sounds of activity to be heard. I looked up and down the street and saw only the houses sunning themselves and old Mrs. Becker puttering about with her jonquils. Mrs. Becker and those jonquils! We had had beautiful jonquils at our old house in the Shenandoah Valley, I remembered. I could still see them brightly bordering the road, following the fence line and spilling over into the pasture. The mountain air must have been a tonic for them, for they were prettier there than in any other place I'd ever been.

I sighed. Memories were always drawing me back and making me homesick. I turned away from Mrs. Becker and her precious flowers and forced my mind back to the present. What I needed was a walk to clear my thoughts. Thoughts somehow fell into place when I went walking.

I stepped off the curb, crossed the street and rustled through the leaves in the empty lot on the corner. The sun was behind me as I rounded the curve

and I could see a shadow walking in front of me, connected to me at my feet, but stretching far up ahead as if trying to disown me.

I waited for a car to pass and went on across the street so I could walk under my favorite pine tree. It overhung the sidewalk, and I was just tall enough to stand on tiptoe and let the tips of the long needles tickle my face as I walked under it. It always smelled so good; spicy almost with a smell that reminded me of blue green mountains and high forests. After a rain, with every needle glistening and a drop of water on each tip, it was prettier than any Christmas tree done up in lights.

I walked on down the hill, kicking the brown gumballs that strayed across the sidewalk and playing an imaginary game of soccer. It had been a long time since I'd played a real game of soccer. We had had a team last year and I remembered how we had all talked, lived and breathed soccer for the few short months before I had moved to Mississippi. My soccer-gumball rolled into the gutter, and I kept on walking.

I felt so out of place in Mississippi. Everything was so different to what I had grown accustomed to in Virginia. The people talked differently, walked differently and even laughed differently. Sometimes I felt a kind of terror grip me deep down inside my soul, and I would look at the people sitting next to me, so busy and content and so very, very far away, and I'd feel so alone. This wasn't where I belonged; this couldn't be where I belonged. I was not even distant kin to these people. I could conform to their pattern, yes, but I could never be one of them. My life had been too different from theirs.

My heart was so filled with memories of people and places, that sometimes I felt it would burst if it could not share them. Already I had talked of Virginia so much that my new friends were growing tired of listening, and yet my heart was still burdened with a need to share the memories; a need to show someone what Virginia was really like -- what I was really like. If only they could see and know Virginia as I did, and meet and love the people I had loved. If only they could play a game of soccer in the snow.

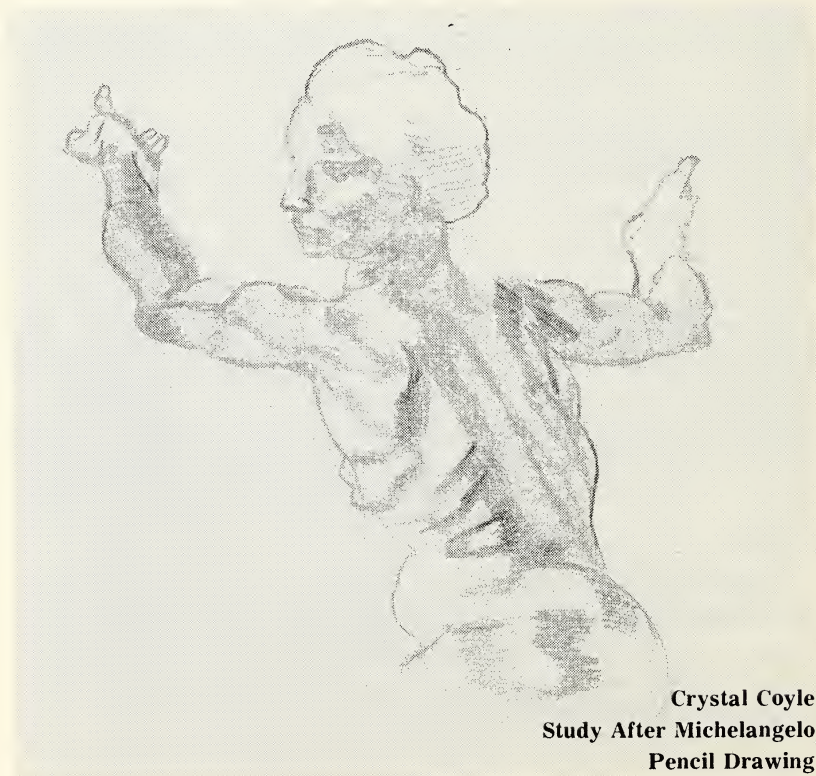
Helpless tears rose to my eyes and the sidewalk in front of me blurred. How I wanted to go home, how I desperately wanted to be back among my own kind, my own friends, back home where people really understood me. I thrust my hands deep into my pockets and walked faster. Somehow I was going to find a way to get home. I had to.

I've learned a lot since that day, almost a year ago, when the jonquils bloomed and I went walking. I've learned how to love my memories and yet not live in them. I've learned how to share some of the memories and how to hug other ones close. I've learned that Mississippi has an awful lot to offer, and that the people here are just as beautiful as the people in my memories.

I still think about Virginia, especially when I happen to be awake in the early mornings, and I still think of mountains when I see jonquils, but instead of reminding me of what I have lost, the memories remind me of what I have, because Virginia is a part of me, and so now is Mississippi.

It has taken many long walks to think it all out, but now at last I know that it's not just my house that I come back to at the end of each walk — it's my home.

— Molly Day
First Place, Junior Award



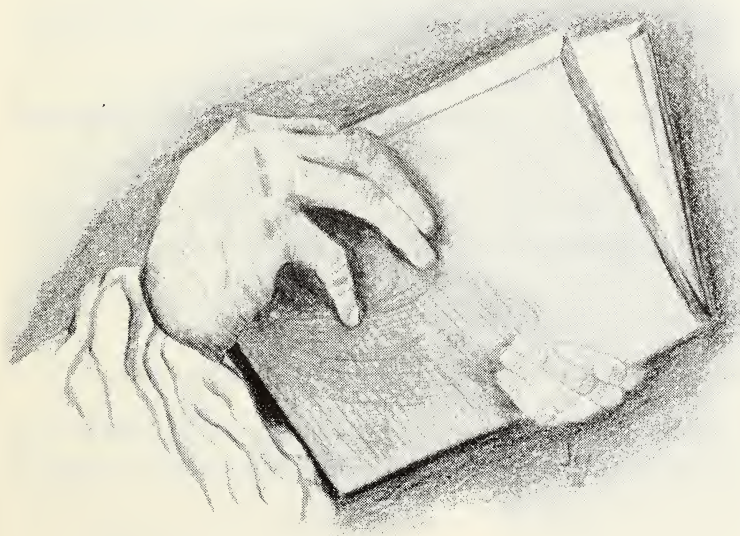
Crystal Coyle
Study After Michelangelo
Pencil Drawing

Naomi

Thin and withered,
Bodies of Sanctity,
They reach out toward
Me.
Translucent, pale,
Blue-veined and fine;
The morning light
Radiates through them.
Eighty years of work and love
Have made them wise and beautiful.
Slowly, carefully,
I reach out and cradle them
As rare china.
Awed and afraid of their fragility,
I am seized by wonder
At the hands of my grandmother.

— Connie Shiel

First Place, Junior Award



The Flower Garden

This skit was meant for showing many differences of opinions on a particular subject, and not for the purpose of showing up any specific group.

Narrator: The episode you are about to see is taken from a typical flower garden in Home Town, USA. But this area of fertile, richly cultivated land used for growing flowering plants is not by any means ordinary! The garden's "residents" are now allowed to make their own radical decisions, rational or irrational. Their beliefs and convictions are their own, and the mastery of the world is possessed by the flowers!

Daffodil: I don't understand why you can't have dinner ready when I get home. What do you do all day? It seems as though you're always dragging your roots. You look a mess, and so does the flowerbed!

Petunia: Now wait just a dog-gone minute! I told your sweet dandelions to set the table and warm up the leftover-minerals for supper. And as to your remark about my looks, if you would let me go to the greenhouse every once and awhile, I would probably look better. Why don't you fix your own dinner?

Daffodil: Dandelions! Come here this instant!

Dandelion 1: Daddy, will you please help me with this problem? I can't .

Daffodil: Shut up! All you kids ever do is bother me. Now, I mean stop it!

Dandelion 2: What do you want now? I'm tired of your ordering me around! I'm sick and tired of this whole set-up and you old cronies!

Daffodil: What! Why you little . . .

[Argument fades; next conversation begins]

Daisy: But Miss Tulip, I don't understand how you got that answer. When I worked that problem, I got 2 times the square root of 4 times 6 divided by 3. Where did I go wrong?

Miss Tulip: I am not going to answer your question! You just sit there like a knot on a log and expect me to come along and get a pitcher and pour it in. Well, I'm not. If you would open your leaves and pay attention, maybe something would soak into your bud. Besides, what did you get?

Daisy: But, but, but . . .

Miss Tulip: I am not going to stand for that! Now, don't "but" me. Just sit there and be quiet. Or can you do that?

Daisy: I don't have to stay and listen to this!

[Daisy gets up and walks out as lights fade. Lights brighten as next conversation begins.]

Mr. Rose: Hello. Yes, ma'am, I ain't never tried to call this far out befo'. I wanta talk to my auntie, Azalea. She lives clean down on the other side of farmer Brown's driveway. So ifin' . . . ma'am? . . .

Recording: I'm sorry. The number you gave has been just . . .

Mr. Rose: Lady, I didn't call no number, I was just calling my auntie. Don't you understand . . .

Recording: . . . is out of order. If you need assistance please hang up and dial your operator. This is . . .

Mr. Rose: What ya mean my aunt is out of order? She's justa sane as you are, maybe more. Besides you are the operator. Ain't there someone . . .

(Buzz -z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z)

Mr. Rose: Goll darn it! Never did like these new fangled contraptions. Sure do wish I had taim to talk to people instead of these things . . . What is this world coming to? Hey, Yeller, let's go hunting!

[Lights fade off; then a new conversation begins.]

Avalanche Lily: Yes, there is no place quite like the mountains. They're so peaceful and quiet with no smog or smoke and plenty of melted snow.

Yucca: Melted SNOW, indeed! Who would want to live in an inferior

place like that when they have the choice to come to the warm, pleasant-climate desert and enjoy the warm sunshine and breezes there? Yes, there's nothing like warm sand under your roots.

Water Hyacinth: You have got to be kidding? The desert! I wouldn't stay in that dry-mouthed place for one minute. The water is the fun place to be! Nothing quite like good ole H₂O to spread your roots in and feel relaxed.

African Violet: Come on now, you guys, admit it. Everyone here knows that the flowers that everyone is jealous of are the indoor plants. You all know that we are the best and most beautiful because we receive the most care.

[Voices mix; then fade, new conversation begins.]

Bunchberry: Hello, folks. I'm Tom Bunchberry, and I'm here with the "Miss Flower of the World" contest. Among the semifinalists in this contest are:

From the Far East, the Night-Blooming Cereus; the Night Bloomer climbs along walls and rocky ledges in the West Indies. This young flower is accented by its creamy blossoms, which open . . . **only at night.**

From the Region of South Africa, the Bird of Paradise.
The Bird of Paradise is accented by her bright colors of orange and yellow. Many in her area compare her to the brightly colored birds in South Africa.

And from South America comes the Cattleya Orchid.
The Cattleya Orchid, a very young and beautiful flower with her light, sensitive petals, flourishes in the hot, moist climates of many South-American countries.

And last but certainly not least, the Alpine flowers.
These beautiful flowers, the edelweiss and the pink-ragged robin, brighten mountain slopes all over the lands of Europe.

May I have the envelope please?

And the winner is . . . The Cattleya Orchid! The Cattleya Orchid is our flower of the world for 1976-77!

Cheering fades: lights on new conversation]

Water Lily: No, you're wrong, dead wrong! We lilies believe once you bloom, you never wilt and the only way to grow to be a good flower is to be submerged in the "water." The Gardener's manual points all this out.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit: You have got to admit though, the Gardener knows everything you are going to do before you do it. We believe that he has already decided who will be used in the prettiest arrangements and who will be left to suffer the cold of winter.

Violet: There never was a "gardener"! The owner of this garden is still the one who waters and feeds us. If you would only notice, you would see that the "gardener" has not been hired yet! The day will come when you will admit that we Violets are right, but it will be too late!

Lily of the Valley: You're all sorta right, and you're all sorta wrong. There are lots of gardeners, but they only work when you need them. See, there is the water hose, the hoe, the rake, and the tiller. There is no gardener, or for that matter, no owner! We are just here by fate, and not by the hand of some "gardener".

Gardener: You are all fighting among yourselves, but don't you see you should work together? I tell you this, my flowers: a flower body cannot get into my flower arrangements. Your perishable bodies aren't the right kind to live in. Here is a strange and wonderful secret! It won't be long before I'll begin choosing and picking flowers. It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. When the last bed is hoed and the last roots are watered, all the old flowers will have new blooms, and I will choose whom I want for "arrangements".

[Lights dim all the way out.]

Narrator: And that's the way the flower world will be, a world of conflict, controversy, troubles, and promises. Ever heard of a world like that before?

— Joe Brown
First Place, Junior Award



Natalie Wilkinson
Pencil Drawing

Sky

Jason Rawlins stared dully across the once green field, alive and growing, now brown, parched and cracked. All the corn was dead. Even the hardy weed, peavine, was no more than a shriveled twig.

He squinted upward at the sky and saw no sign of clouds. It was clear--blue and clear. The sun shone cruelly, and it seemed to Jason that it was laughing at the plight of the weak humans.

It was the eighty-ninth day and still no rain had fallen on the southern farmlands. Little by little every living thing was giving up to the drought. Ponds and creeks were dried up; crops were long scorched and animals were slowly dying. The humans could not be far behind.

Knowing and fearing all this, Jason murmured a curse, kicked at the cracked ground and walked slowly toward his house, gray puffs of dust marking his steps.

Inside the house his wife, Anna, was doing her best to provide nourishment for her family. With the poor materials at hand she prepared a cornmeal gruel for her loved ones so that they might have some strength to face the terrible day ahead.

Already a thin, mousy woman, Anna had become even leaner with the hard times, and the work lines on her face had become even more taut and drawn. Her whole being had taken on the dull, grayish color of the baked earth.

Jason and Anna had one thing that made their lives worthwhile--their six year old daughter, Elsa. The girl was the center of attention--their reason to live

Although the heat and dryness had sapped almost everything, Elsa still looked alive. Her white complexion and long, pale, blonde hair were still the same. The only mark the drought has made on the girl was a reddening of her cheeks, which was only enhanced by her innocent smile. She was the most treasured possession of the couple--living proof of their love.

After the family had finished their meager meal, Jason took his bony mare to a nearby stream to drink. The mare was the last of their animals;

the sundry others had either died in the heat or had been used as food for the family.

Anna cleared the breakfast bowls and started cleaning the house. As she swept the ever present gray dust from the house, she stared up to the hard blue sky--a merciless sky--a killing sky. She worked dazedly and the only thoughts that kept her worried mind occupied were a fervent hope for rain and safety for her daughter.

Slowly her sweeping subsided and she leaned on the broom. She prayed desperately for the salvation of her daughter from this hellish nightmare. The unblinking sky gave no sign of recognition. It just stared back at the baked, dead earth. Ann broke from her reverie and resumed her work.

Little Elsa took her doll and went outside to amuse herself. Although she had been warned continuously, Elsa found the coolest place to play was under the dilapidated shed that surrounded the dried out well. The hand pump at the well had been removed long before and all that remained was a dark, gaping hold--a dry, bloodless wound in the ground.

Elsa leaned her head over and called down into the well, delighting in the echo that reverberated up from the bottom. As she played she shifted her hand and unknowingly knocked her precious doll off the edge. In a desperate grab she herself followed her toy.

She fell as though in slow motion; a high scream was wrenched from her white throat. The last thing for her young eyes to see was the hard, blue sky. It stared unblinking at the parched earth.

Both Anna and Jason heard the scream, he coming across the field from the stream, and she, inside sweeping.

Jason dropped the horse's rein and ran full speed to the well, Anna rushed out the back door, not knowing what had happened.

As Jason heaved in exertion, he gasped out brokenly that Elsa had fallen in the well. He leaned over and called down the well. All that met his anxious ears was his own echo from the abyss. Anna knelt beside the hold, fervently praying and rocking back and forth, not knowing what else to do.

With a madman's fury Jason mounted his mare and clapped his heels against her rail-like sides, sending her off in a clumsy canter up the dirt road.

Soon he was back with four or five neighbors equipped with ropes and willing hands. A wife of one of the men took the distraught Anna inside as the men started the gruesome task.

With a stout length of hemp, Jason's waist was girdled tightly, and little by little he was lowered into the well. As anxious faces hovered over the opening, waiting for a sign from Jason, the men heard a muffled "Oh my God". Someone yelled down and Jason called brokenly for them to pull him up.

When he reached the light a terrible sight met the men's eyes. Held carefully across Jason's shoulder was little Elsa, her frock soiled and torn, her body limp, with her blonde head hanging curiously askew. Her pale face stared blindly into space.

Jason laid her gently on the ground--his craggy face breaking with grief. Reaching inside his shirt, he pulled out the doll and put it beside the girl. He looked up at the faces of his friends in disbelief.

Then, as if on cue, Anna broke through the back door away from the restraining arms of the neighbor. Her face was alight with hope. All that met her wild eyes were the faces of the men, her husband, and her daughter's body.

Giving a loud cry, deep and guttural, not unlike that of a wounded animal, she fell to the ground in a crumpled heap. The neighbor woman ran to her, chaffed her wrists, patted her cheeks, and in a frightened voice announced, "Why-why, she's dead!"

Jason still knelt beside his daughter, no sound issuing from his constricted throat, wrapped in waves of shock and not believing the horrible spectacle he had just witnessed.

One of the men pulled him to his feet and led him, like a child, inside the house. The rest of the group gently lifted the bodies and brought them inside.

The funerals were the next day. People from all over came to the Rawlins' home to comfort Jason, who wandered, as someone lost, from room to room. Still the man had not spoken.

At the services things were the same. He sat stone-faced and unmoving inside and stood unyielding in the blaring sun until both graves were covered.

Friends accompanied him to his house, but at the porch he turned and spoke in a hollow, empty voice, "I appreciate your help, but I just want to be alone, please?"

The throng turned and went back to their farms. The sun above still beat down wickedly on the plagued land, and still, no rain was in sight.

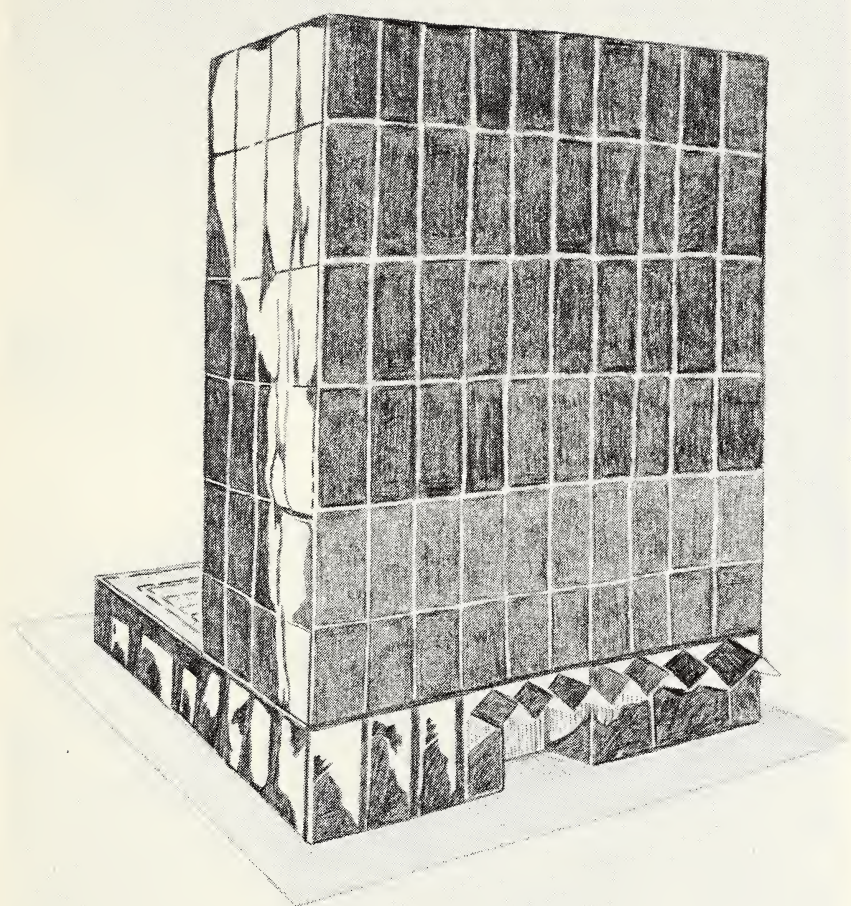
Jason stood at the window staring vacantly at the clear, blue sky--going through the motions of living.

At night fall he wandered aimlessly through the empty house and as if drawn, trekked to the cemetery. He went to the newly dug graves and knelt. In the moonlight he presented the picture of agony and defeat.

Suddenly the broken man began to sob, slowly at first, and then crescendoing to a frenzied rhythm, ending in wild curses--to God, to the sky, to the world. They were flung blindly in the darkness to hit whatever had caused his sorrow. They subsided slowly and Jason hunched over, shudders running down his back. He no longer had any reason to live.

Jason heard a soft "plop" in the dust beside him, and another, and another. He turned his haunted face to the sky and the blessed rain mixed with the salt tears on his face, bringing life to the dead earth.

—Connie Shiel
First Place, Junior Award



David Goss
Pencil Drawing

